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Carter Receives Apologetic Call From President

Absolved From Blame for Bombing in Beirut

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28—President Reagan telephoned former President Jimmy Carter this morning to say he had not intended to suggest that Mr. Carter's Administration was responsible for the bombing last week of the United States Embassy in Lebanon, the White House announced today.

Mr. Carter and many other prominent Democrats criticized Mr. Reagan Thursday for remarks the President made the day before that were interpreted as an effort to shift the blame for the bombing, in part, to the previous Administration.

A White House official who did not want to be identified by name said Mr. Reagan had told Mr. Carter in the call, "I was not suggesting that you or your Administration were responsible for the declining intelligence capability, and I certainly did not suggest that your Administration was the cause of that happening at the embassy in Beirut."

The official said that Mr. Reagan's statement Wednesday about intelligence failures had been "misinterpreted" and that the President was referring to the "decade-long decline" in intelligence-gathering by agents.

Four-Minute Phone Call

"He just wanted Carter to understand what he meant by his statement," the official said.

The official said that Mr. Reagan had called Mr. Carter at his home in Plains, Ga., and that the call had lasted four minutes.

A spokesman in Mr. Carter's Atlanta office said the former President had no comment on the telephone call. The White House did not report Mr. Carter's part of the conversation.

Mr. Carter said Thursday that Mr. Reagan's remark about intelligence lapses had been "personally insulting" and "gross in its implications." He asked Mr. Reagan to "apologize for these misleading statements."

In a question-and-answer session Wednesday with students at Bowling Green University in Ohio, Mr. Reagan was asked about the embassy bombing. This, according to a White House transcript, was part of his response:

"The real protection, and where we're feeling the effects today of the near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years — before we came here, the effort that somehow to say, well, spying is somehow dishonest and let's get rid of our intelligence agents — and we did that to a large extent."

Meanwhile, Congressional Democrats continued to fault the Reagan Administration as not adequately protecting the embassy in Lebanon.

In July most embassy personnel there were moved from a facility in West Beirut to a building in a suburb of East Beirut. Marines who had been guarding the embassy were withdrawn and replaced by Lebanese Christian militiamen who were hired as guards.

On Sept. 20, the new embassy was devastated by a suicidal car-bomber. Two Americans and an undetermined number of Lebanese were killed, and many others were wounded. It was the third such bombing of an American post in Lebanon in 17 months.

'Incredible Arrogance'

When State Department officials went before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today seeking more money for embassy security worldwide, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware, accused the Administration of "incredible arrogance" in not "acknowledging mistakes."

"What I can't understand," Mr. Biden said, "is why this Administration and the President can't cut out all the malarkey and buck-passing and admit that they made a mistake and assess some responsibility."

In this instance and in the case of the attack on the Marine garrison in Lebanon last October in which 241 servicemen were killed, President Reagan has declined to try to affix individual blame.

Pressed by Mr. Biden on why the Administration was just now seeking added funds for embassy security, Ronald I. Spiers, Under Secretary of State for Management, replied that the new request resulted from the "political realities" that followed the bombing last week.

The Foreign Relations Committee approved the Administration's request for security programs costing \$366 million.